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A HISTORY OF
OLD NEW YORK LIFE
AND THE
HOUSE OF THE DELMONICOS,
BY
LEOPOLD RIMMER.



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SEYMOUR DURST

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(NEW YORK), 1651.

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1898
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PREFACE.

Ridet argento domus ara castis
Vincta verbenis, avet immolato
 Spargier agno
Cuncia lestenat manus huc et illuc
Cursitant mistae pueris puellae.

LEOPOLD RIMMER,

Author.



Leopold Rimmer



Mrs Leopold Rimmer,

WITH PERMISSION
OF
MR. CH. CH. DELMONICO,

TO MY ESTEEMED READERS.



HAVE to go back to my childhood before I can tell my historic facts in a letter to the public of old New York and the noble house of Delmonicos.

I was born at Langenlois, near the Danube, of Lower Austria. My dear, good father, Leopold Rimmer, was born in the same city in 1800, on the 6th of December and had a common education of the public school and began his life, after his father died, as a wine grower ; he bought a house with the finest wine cellar you can imagine. This cellar is so great and big that anybody can drive a four-in-hand Tally-Ho around in it. It is built of brick and the temperature does not vary more than 2 degrees Fahren-

heit, winter and summer; it is so high that casks of 200 barrels can lie side by side.

The press-house is a marvel of simplicity, and to-day is still in existence.

We were six children, four boys and two girls; we were brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, but we are now non-believers.

I was ministrant in our church to the fathers of the congregation, and I can read the Mass in Latin just as well as any priest. I had a good, fair schooling in a public high school. I graduated with honor in every branch, history, Latin, geography and astronomy—except religion.

Then I had to learn some trade or business and, as a lively boy, I liked hotel life, and so I went to Vienna, the capital of Austria and Hungary, and took a place as apprentice in the Hotel Kaiserin Elizabeth of Austria, Weiburgasse, No. 11, in 1856. The hotel was then under the management of Andreas Bauer, who had also the Hotel Tallagini, in Ischel, upper Austria. Mr. Tallagini was a railroad constructor, who built the Semmerig Bahn, with its tunnels and high up grade to Trieste.

When I grew older I took charge, when eighteen years of age, of the Hotel aux trois Courune d'Or in Vienna, and my good father gave 2,000 florins as a security that I could not run away with the hotel or the money I collected. That was in 1862.

Among my customers was King Alfonzo the XII, when he and his mother Isabella were expelled from Spain, and Spain was a republic then for a short time, as everybody knows.

Alfonzo studied in the Theresiannum, where only blue blood is accepted, like the Hapsburgers of Austria, or any nobleman of some great house, as princes or barons of some old houses, and counts—of no account—and the like.

When King Alfonzo came to my hotel and took luncheon I had many chats with him.

At that time I was good looking and went to my coiffeur in a fiacre every day to have my hair curled with a hot iron, and that is the reason why I have not much hair left on my head now. I was always dressed to kill, in summer white pants and dress coat, and when I stood at the door, a fine, well-shaped good look-

ing, beautiful girl passed every day, at the same hour, from the school ; she looked at me and I looked at her. She went nearly crazy for love of me, and I was dead gone on her, and she is my wife to-day and happy, after a married life of thirty-two years. A young millionaire shot himself because she would not look at him.

Our wedding trip was to the United States of America, in 1866, on the old Hamburg steamer, Teutonia. We were frightfully seasick, but we sat on the deck and lived from love, till we came to Hoboken.

I could then speak French, German, English and Italian, Latin like any scholar, and a little of the Austrian slavonic languages.

After finding some quarters through a friend whom I already had in this noble land of the free, I became a citizen of the United States of America.

Three days after my landing I was engaged by Mr. Charles Delmonico in the Fourteenth Street house, northeast corner of Fourteenth Street, and Mr. Charles Delmonico, seeing my ability, gave me charge of the café room. I entered on St.

Patrick's Day, the 17th of March, 1866. It was a very cold day, with plenty of snow. The 17th of March is also the birthday of Mr. Ch. Ch. Delmonico, the father of Mr. Ch. Ch. Delmonico. Mr. Christ was a diamond broker, in Maiden Lane and in Paris. I knew him well, and Mr. Ch. Ch. Delmonico had breeches on then.

Mr. Lorenzo Delmonico was the heart and soul of that great establishment, with its grand ball-room, the fine blue room, with its famous blue satin ameublements, the Chinese room and the library room where the rich old New Yorkers dined and wined their ladies and friends in great style.

At that time Mr. Lorenzo went every day to the Washington and Fulton markets, and picked out everything at four o'clock in the morning, for twenty-five years, what was good and fine, from meats to game, fish, fowls, terrapin, whatever was in season, vegetables, and all that makes a fine table beautiful, and at eight o'clock he came back and I served him with a small cup of black coffee; then he smoked a strong Figaro cigar and went home in his cab to 111 East

Fifteenth Street and went to bed. Every evening he came back, and sat with his friends, after taking a little supper, till 12 o'clock he went home again, like a clock work.

Among his friends, there are only two alive now, and they are Mr. Wood Gibson, a life-long friend of the Delmonico family, and Mr. Jordan L. Mott, the iron king of Mott Haven, the chum of Mr. Siro Delmonico, of the Chamber Street house. Mr. Wood Gibson died since August 4th, 1898, in New Jersey, and Mr. Jordan L. Mott is living yet. Beside these gentlemen, the others all died long since. There were Mr. Bedlow, Mr. Floyd, Mr. Ben. Venberg, with his high heels; Mr. George Lawrence, Mr. Arrow Smith and Mr. Turnbull, the old sport, who owned Dexter, the fastest trotter at that time.

The first great dinner I saw was the dinner given to Professor Morse, the electrician and inventor of the first real useful telegraph. Professor Morse was the first man who built a telegraph line from New York to Washington, and it worked. The first European cable was laid in 1866 with the Great Eastern, and it broke very

soon after it was laid ; the second one was laid in 1867, with the Great Eastern and the Faraday, and it worked.

In the grand ball-room there was a connection made with the first European cable to London, and Professor Morse telegraphed the first cablegram from his table, and in forty minutes, the answer came back, and was read to the assembled three hundred and fifty guests, and received with tremendous applause.

Now, with the permission of my esteemed readers, I will have to go back to music. It was in 1857 when Franz Liszt, the great composer and piano artist, was in Vienna, and living in the Hotel Kaiserin Elizabeth of Austria. At the same time Anton Rubenstein was there, and Richard Wagner and Alfred Jaehl, and the great violincello artist, Piatti. I knew them all well. Richard Wagner was just then bringing out, and on the stage, *Rienzi* and *Lohengrin*, those two great operas. When Anton Rubenstein made his journey to the United States of America he was a daily customer at Delmonicos, and I had many chats with him.

Afterwards Franz Liszt became an Abbé in Rome. Oh *weh!*

Then Manager Bateman brought the first French opera bouffe company from Paris to New York. The first opera he brought out was the Grand Duchess of Geroldstein, by Jacques Offenbach, a German, but a Parisian composer, with Mademoiselle Tosté and Montaland, and when General Boom Boom sang the song, "*le Sabre de mon Père*", the jeunesse doré of New York went wild with enthusiasm. It was played in the French theater, corner of Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue.

Mr. James Fisk was a visitor at the theater and liked Mademoiselle Montaland, and invited her to dine with him at Delmonico's. Any man with money would do the same. He brought her often with a four-in-hand to Delmonico's.

And then came the great fire in Chicago. James Fisk, as President of the Erie Railroad, went with six horses in a truck wagon, to his many friends, and collected whatever he could get, from clothes to eatables, and sent them by express to Chicago. It took the train 60 hours.

Then came the Black Friday and also Miss Josie Mansfield and Mr. Edward Stokes, and the end of this terrible romance everybody knows.

I remember when Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt was entertaining in his house at the corner of Fourth Street and Washington Square, then very fashionable, and the great caterer was always Mr. Lorenzo and Mr. Charles Delmonico, his nephew.

At that time Mr. August Belmont, who had a lame foot, gave an after theater supper in the blue room for about fifty of his guests and friends. He sat in the middle of the table, his lady, Mrs. Belmont, opposite him, and to her left sat Mr. John Hecksher, the only gentleman at this entertainment who is living yet.

About the same time, in 1867, the stock of the Maison d'Or, No. 44 Union Square, proprietor, Mr. Matinez, was sold at auction, and Mr. Lorenzo Delmonico bought the finest and oldest brands of port and sherry wines in existence, and some of them are to-day in the Delmonico cellar in Twenty-sixth Street, Madison Square. Some of them are over one hundred years old. Price unlimited.

Then came a great deal of trouble to the noblest, best hearted and most generous man that ever lived, Mr. Lorenzo Delmonico ; he invested money in a petroleum company in Brooklyn to the amount of half a million dollars, and I remember he went with the steamer Lorenzo, from the *Companie Transatlantique Française* to his birthplace, Faido Canton, Ticino, Switzerland, to build a school there, for the children of his compatriots. Before leaving he gave the power of attorney to his brother, Mr. Constant Delmonico, who had charge of the old Beaver Street house, with instruction to help the petroleum company in case they needed some money, and he did it so well that in a short time half a million dollars was gone, and Mr. Lorenzo Delmonico found out that he was a ruined man. When Mr. Lorenzo heard this news he came right home to New York to see what he could do. Mr. Lorenzo's friends advised him to go right ahead with his business. He then had four establishments ; first, the Beaver Street house, managed by his brother, Constant Delmonico ; the Broad Street house, managed by Mr. John Longhi ; the Chamber street house, managed

by Mr. Siro Delmonico, the Fourteenth Street house, managed by Mr. Charles Delmonico. Mr. Sandford, from Brooklyn, Mr. Guedin, a brother-in-law of Mr. Lorenzo, and others helped him, and he paid every cent to his creditors, and made more millions of dollars ; and besides, he never collected over half a million dollars by law, which New Yorkers owed him. He died in Sharon Springs, State of New York, from a stroke of paralysis, in the hotel of his friend, Mr. Gardner. I look like Mr. L. Delmonico.

In his will and last testament, he left everything to his nephew, Mr. Charles Delmonico, with the order that as long as a Delmonico lives, the business must be kept running. To his brother Siro, he left \$100,000, the interest of it only, and that broke Mr. Siro's heart and he died.

Now, Mr. Charles Delmonico was caught by the Wall Street fever, operated largely, and lost almost every time ; his broker, Mr. Alexander Taylor, is living yet. Then one cold day in the winter, I do not remember the exact date any more, he wanted to take a walk, and when he came down stairs, his nephew, Mr. Ch. Ch. Del-

monico, who was to accompany him, said : "Uncle, it is too cold ; I will go up-stairs and get a warm coat for you." And when he came down again he was gone. He wandered over the ferry to New Jersey and on to South Orange, and asked for a cup of coffee in a farmer's house, and said he has no money, but he has big friends in New York ; after he warmed himself he left and was seen no more alive. The stricken family offered \$5,000 to the person who will find his body. It was found in a ditch by the road side, and the reward was paid. With poor Mr. Charles all was over !

Now I have to go back to the living again. There is Mr. Louis Delmonico, who owns an art gallery, 166 Fifth Avenue, his sister, Miss Josie Delmonico, and the sister of Mr. Charles, Miss Rose Delmonico. Mr. L. Delmonico has two sons, fine strapping boys, from nine to twelve years old.

Among the living employees of the Fourteenth Street house are Mr. Charles Rauhafer, the greatest of all the chef cooks in the world, and he is a great disciplinarian ; there is no back talk allowed by any means with him.

Mr. Garnier, who commenced as a young boy in the office, in Fourteenth Street; he is the acting manager of all the Delmonicos' business now. Mr. Philip Willerman, who commenced very young in the bar, and is thirty-four years in the house, without missing one day in his life, and he is the most honest man that ever lived. He is now managing the Palm and Roof Garden in Forty-fourth Street. The engineer, Mr. Robert Allan, who had done the technical work and steam fitting, in the Fourteenth Street house, and in the Twenty-sixth Street house, and he attends to his work yet, in Twenty-sixth Street to-day, and myself.

Mr. Nestor Lattard, the young and able manager of the Twenty-sixth Street house, is not only just, but kind and polite to every employee. He is also a landscape painter of ability, and whenever he has a leisure hour, he paints up-stairs for pleasure. He has at least a hundred paintings in his atelier. His brother is a renowned painter and artist in Paris.

Louis Napoleon made his headquarters in the old Stevens House when he was in exile in America.

Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, the Hollands, the Van Burens, the Aspinwalls, the Stuyvesants, the Cuttings and the Morgans, came there to drink their *café à la Française*.

Now for Tweed and Company and the new courthouse ; there was millions in it à la Tammany Hall. The marriage of Mr. Tweed's daughter was the greatest affair that New York ever saw. I think it cannot be beat to-day in Greater New York.

Horace Greeley and Fernando Wood were in the Chamber Street house every day, when sunbeaming Mr. Siro Delmonico, with his ever shining stove pipe hat, was directing the Chamber Street house. When Tweed was in his glory, Greenwich town with its great American club-house sprang up, now called Indian Harbor. There was then a feasting like the old Romans did ; high up in an oak tree, hundreds of years old, was a platform large enough to seat fifty people. Music and wine and beautiful women were there, and Paradise was not in it, and where did Tweed's glory end? From a poor man to the boss of Tammany, from exile to death as a fugitive in foreign lands.

The next event was that of the beautiful Misses Smyths ; their father was the Collector of the Port of New York. The Jaffray brothers were then all the go, and William married one of the Misses Smyths. He had a great home in England and died there. I do not know what became of Mr. Howard Jaffray.

In 1873 I went with my wife to the exposition in Vienna. I bought two drafts from Messrs. Biederman and Rubino, No. 23 William Street, and when I was at sea on the steamer Deutschland, came the panic of 1873, and everybody in Vienna failed. Gold was at 18 per cent. premium. In Vienna there was a dozen of suicides a day ; yesterday a millionaire, to-day a beggar.

In the Prater, a park in Vienna, where the race-course is, the Italian, Slamuci, wrapped the cheese and Salami in thousand dollar bonds.

Mr. Biederman is the brother-in-law of Mr. Bishoffsheim and Erlanger, bankers in London, failed also.

When Mr. Luckemeier gave that great dinner in Fourteenth Street—\$75 a head without wine, it

was the greatest affair that ever could be got up in any land. The table was eighteen feet wide and as long as the hall; it had a big lake in the middle, with a big cage over it; there were swans swimming around in it; there were large trees with rustic bird cages, and singing canary birds, and two fountains, stones and sand just like a natural park. Tiffany built the big golden cage; it was a sight, and Mr. Delmonico allowed everybody to see it, from the gentlemen guests to the plainest servant in the house.

Now, since Delmonico moved up to Forty-fourth Street, Twenty-sixth Street is like a step-child, but memory will stay; for instance, the St. James Hotel, a landmark of the olden times, was turned into one of the finest office buildings of modern times, fourteen stories high, with hundreds of offices and marvellous accommodations—elevators and dynamos, and built by Mr. Bruce Price, one of the smartest and ablest architects of modern times.

The only mistake that ever was made against the interest of the Delmonicos' business was Mr. Charles Rauhafer's cook book, which gave away

all secrets of the house, and every Tom, Dick and Harry, who calls himself a chief cook, and had learned his trade in Delmonico's kitchen, can cook and make up the finest dinners on record, with that book, which tells him everything he don't know. There is hardly one hotel in New York to-day whose chef did not learn his cooking at Delmonico's, every one of them. The book gave all the secrets to the world—the market, what is in season, where to get it, and what is the correct thing to eat every day, and all the year around.

And this is the error that was made by Mr. Ch. Ch. Delmonico.

The only gentleman living yet from the Tweed régime is Mr. Murphy, ex-collector of the port of New York ; he walks sometimes now into the Delmonico café, as straight as an arrow, with his cream face, like our noble president, Mr. McKinley, and smokes a cigar not lighted ; he is an honest citizen, and was a great politician in his times, gone by. Mr. Murphy has three sons, Mr. Edgar Murphy, the great wing shot and sporting editor of the New York *Journal* ; Mr.

Waller Murphy, a fine looking man, tall, six feet, blond, and very good natured. He is agent of a great wine and liquor concern.

Now, for curiosity's sake. Very few people know why Mr. James Gordon Bennett's nose is broke. I can tell you that. It was one day away back in the seventies, when, one nice summer day, a party sat in the Fourteenth Street house café; amongst them were Mr. Charles Delmonico, Mr. Edward Stokes, Mr. George Lawrence, Mr. James Gordon Bennett, Mr. Ben Wenberg; it was a race day in Jerome Park, and about two o'clock in the afternoon they had luncheon and champagne; they were very happy and chatted about this and about that. All at once Mr. Bennett slapped Mr. Stokes' face—why, I don't know, and Mr. Stokes wanted to kill Mr. Bennett, but the other gentlemen would not have it; so Mr. Ch. Delmonico suggested to have it out, fair and square. They went right into it, took their coats off and went out into the hall. In a twinkling of an eye Mr. Bennett was on the floor, and athletic Mr. Stokes hammered away on Mr. Bennett's nose like a sledge hammer, when the other

gentlemen took him away and satisfaction was given. We had to bring Mr. Bennett up-stairs and sent for a doctor to have Mr. Bennett's nose fixed up, and he has the mark on his nose to-day yet.

Mr. J. G. Bennett lives now most of the time in London, where he spends his money which he makes in New York from his great paper, the *Herald*, founded by his father. The printing, building and offices of the *Herald*, on Herald Square, are a sight by themselves, with the marvellous printing machines of Messrs. R. Hoe & Co., New York and London, which prints in colors, folds and cuts so quick, like rain, ready for the public every hour. It is an astonishing invention of a genius.

But Mr. J. G. Bennett is not as true a republican as his father was ; he tries to flatter the Prince of Wales. What for? I have no idea. What is royalty, I should like to know. Look for instance to the Kings of Bavaria, the Wittelsbachers.

There is King Otto, crazy like a lunatic and chained in a padded room, so that he cannot kill himself. His brother jumped into a lake with his doctor and both drowned. What right have

such men to be kings from God's grace, I would like to know. A man is a man, when a gentleman, and a republic is the only government and power on the face of the earth. Look at Uncle Sam and what the United States of America have accomplished ; they own the world. Where are the European powers? We blow them off the earth. England, once our enemy, now our best friend, and the rest of the foreign powers are not in it.

Monroe doctrine is right, whatever may come. The Europeans laughed at us, that we have no navy ; we have no soldiers ; we cannot march or shoot, like they can ; we have no generals ; oh, no ! we cannot compare with them, oh, no ! But what does the world think now of Uncle Sam ?

The new Forty-fourth Street house is, from the outside, a fine building, in the renaissance style of the fourteenth century, Louis XIV of France, and built by Messrs. Lord and King, great architects ; but the inside, as a restaurant, is a mistake ; they did not know what hotel service was and never asked anybody who

knew something about it. There is the entrance on the side street; it ought to be on Fifth Avenue; the kitchen, high and large; the dining-room, small and low; the café room, small and low and black, with three windows looking at a stable.

Hipnotatum, Svengo, ubi, ibi.

Now, my dear readers, look back to the genius of old Mr. Charles Delmonico, who built the Twenty-sixth Street house; it is situated on the finest piece of land in New York City, corner of Twenty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue, in front of a fine park, the Madison Square Park; there is Admiral Farragut's statue right in front of Delmonico's; the park itself is a sight, with its big trees, some of them hundreds of years old, its wonderful fountain and flower beds; there is not such a piece of land in any city, not in Paris, nor in London, or Berlin, or Vienna. The quickness of service to the guests of the house is something marvellous; the guest first gives his order to the waiter; in a second the waiter gives the order to the cooks, and that is all, so simple and quick; and I can safely say there is no house in the world which can do the same thing.

There is another great man well acquainted with the Delmonicos, Mr. John H. Starin, the multi-millionaire, and owner of Glen Island, and steamships for passengers and transportation, the father-in-law of our noble general, Mr. Howard Carroll, who went so gallantly to the front to fight for our glorious Stars and Stripes of Uncle Sam.

Mr. John H. Starin, with his son Mr. Myndert Starin, the general manager of those neglected islands, turned them into a fairy land. I think there is not another place like it on the face of the earth—those shady walks, the menagerie, the Klein Deutschland, the rustic Rhein Castle, its beautiful waters around it for pleasure boats, boat races and the like. It is a wonder to look at ; its baths and up-to-date restaurant and clam bake, etc.

In thanking you, my dear readers, for your patience,

I remain very truly yours,

LEOPOLD RIMMER,

AUTHOR.





